

NEWS RELEASE



USDA Forest Service Santa Fe National Forest

For Immediate Release

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ROADSAFETY

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Santa Fe National Forest Assessing Las Conchas Fire Area Road Safety

Santa Fe, NM – The Las Conchas fire has created significant safety hazards for anyone entering the burned area, including threats from flash flooding, landslides, road washouts, falling trees, and rolling rocks. The Forest Service is placing a high priority on assessing these hazards and risks that would potentially affect the public using Forest System Roads that access private land within the burned fire area.

At this time, we predict that safety hazards along some routes are so extreme that access will not be possible in the immediate future. For example, Forest Road 89 accessing The Pines and the road accessing Bland Canyon from the south have been especially impacted by fire conditions. There are no treatments that could be immediately accomplished that would make the routes safe until at least after the period of monsoon rains is over, at which time further hazard and risk assessments will be conducted.

For specific routes accessing private land in other areas of the burn:

- Hydrologists on the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team have completed the first stage of assessment of flooding hazards.
- Forest engineers have completed most of the assessment of hazards associated with rolling and falling rock.
- Fire suppression crews have cut many of the burned trees along roads that pose a threat to people travelling on those roads.
- Forest Service forestry staff has begun final assessment of the threat from burned trees in other areas.
- We are focusing first on routes going into the burned area south of Highway 4 as there are unburned homes and primary residences in this area. The hazards along these routes are the most likely to be susceptible to mitigation in the short term.

The Santa Fe National Forest will proceed with these assessments over the next few days and will complete the work for all routes leading to private land within the burned area, except for The Pines and Bland Canyon. As the assessment is complete for each route leading to an area, any mitigation of risk that still needs to be accomplished will begin for that route. As mitigation is completed, letters will be delivered to the affected group of landowners authorizing them to enter the closed area to access their property. Those letters will contain terms and conditions for public access to private property on Forest System Roads.

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